



Player Obligations

"Git er done right the first time"

Copyright © 2012 All Rights Reserved

Planet Hockey, Inc.

By Shawn Killian, Director - Planet Hockey, Inc.

As hockey parents, for the most part, we understand our role which should include being a gracious on-call taxi driver, willing equipment manager, loving banker, enthusiastic cheerleader and computer technician (more on that later).

However, it is important that players, regardless of age, understand their role and obligations in this crazy journey we call hockey.

Let's first start with skills = fun and therefore true fun can not be enjoyed until a player develops strong skills. Naturally we enjoy that which we are good at and unfortunately, the Skills Fairy doesn't visit most of us while we sleep. Rather, strong skills are the result of a lengthy, sometimes frustrating, complex process that revolves around the individual player. Parents are a large part of realized success...and failures, as are coaches, hockey camps, leagues, managers, teammates and the combination of a player's experiences...positive and negative. Developing a skilled hockey player takes a large, positive dose of all of the previous components over a 15+ year period, not just with the player being the focal point, but with the player in the driver's seat and aware of his or her obligations.



Obligations, responsibilities, expectations...these may all seem a bit extreme, until you realize that all great athletes, business people, parents and friends are all driven by these fundamental characteristics.

So what are your 7 year old's obligations to their team? To you as a parent? To themselves? Simply put, absorb, process and implement with a vengeance. We ask this of our children in school, why not in hockey?

An exercise we use at our worldwide skills camps is based on our students' understanding that becoming a skilled hockey player is difficult, players must soak in as much information as possible, players throughout the globe are currently working hard to steal your scholarship or contract and the clock is ticking, but that's not enough. Most players understand those concepts. Rather, we focus on the process each player should take to ensure that the information presented to them during our camp (or during a practice) is not lost and that our students reach out to take the pieces of the game we are handing them. This IS a player's obligation and one that each of their taxi drivers, bankers, equipment managers, cheerleaders and even the Skills Fairy would like (or dare I say, expect) their young hockey enthusiast to embrace.

Try this example. Consider a trip to Costco...I personally dread them. My wife says, "can you go to Costco? We need (then rattles off 15 items)..." Sure Sweetheart, I'm on my way. And off I go. I've learned over the years to make a list and to take a pen to cross off the items one by one as I put them in the cart. Now there is a bit of excitement as I head out, I like the food tasters and a good deal, but Costco is a bit overwhelming and can easily distract even the most focused shopper. This is no different than a

hockey camp or a night of practice...exciting, but with lots going on. If I didn't have my list and returned home without all 15 items, back I go. Not much fun. "Git er done" right the first time and I need a concise list to help me recall each of the items...it's my obligation to come home with each item...much like a player's obligation to leave each ice session with each of the day's lessons filed away for frequent future recall. Coaches and parents, suggest that players bring small notebooks to practice and write down each skill/topic taught at practice and provide them with handouts...then quiz them to help them truly learn all the great information that you deemed worthy of expensive, valuable practice time. There are many useful memory methods, but developing hockey skills is difficult without developing each player's ability to efficiently process practice lessons.

We continually encourage our students to absorb all skills instruction, process it in an organized way along with hundreds of other pieces of hockey information so that it becomes a new, positive part of their game...then do it again and again. This is much like how a computer saves data into organized files that will be accessed and utilized with the click of a button. Having lots of information and files, but not being able to access the files you want on your cluttered computer is frustrating, counterproductive and a huge drain of time and effort. Even a loving banker would question spending money on another toy (new information – hockey camp, league, team or clinic) if it is only to be thrown on the floor of an already messy room.

But much depends on the coach and their emphasis on a player's obligations. If a coach continually throws new information out without players understanding, processing and implementing, then the information is lost, along with tons of collective time and money. Coaches who hold players accountable for the information they are teaching tend to develop their players at a much quicker rate...therefore making the game more fun for their players. There is nothing easy, nor fast about becoming a skilled hockey player. Coaches, challenge your players to focus on 2-3 key components each practice, take notes and to go through their own process turning your messages and efforts into hockey success.

This article was written by Shawn Killian, Director of Planet Hockey Skills Training. Planet Hockey teaches Skills Training Camps throughout the United States and Europe, including the Planet Hockey Ranch (resident hockey/outdoor adventure camp) in Colorado & Vermont, TEAM Planet Hockey European Hockey Tours, and also produces instructional training DVDs. For more information call 720-304-3880, Email info@planethockey.com, or visit: www.planethockey.com.